

*snapd Sneaks a Peek*

# Nellie's - Giving Shelter, Giving Hope

Valentine's Day is approaching - a time to show your appreciation and love for family and friends and hopefully receive an affectionate gesture from that special someone in your life. While many of us are lucky enough to be in a loving, caring relationship, this is not the case for all and, sadly, there are many women subjected to physical and mental abuse on a daily basis. Living in this situation is not only stressful and dangerous to the female but it effects all family members, particularly children. Contrary to some popular opinion, very few women 'choose' to stay in an abusive situation - the reality is never that simple. Quite often women feel stuck, not knowing where to go or who to ask for help. But there is help available for those who need it and Nellie's is one of the best.

Located in downtown Toronto, Nellie's is not only a shelter for women and their children, it also provides ongoing education, recreational programs and community resources. Founded in 1973, Nellie's, which is named after famed pioneer feminist Nellie McClung, helped fill the need for homeless women in the city - at the time there were just a handful of beds for women compared to those available for men. Over the last 40 years, the organization has grown, largely through the efforts of tireless frontline workers and volunteers, to become what it is today - a safe haven, education centre and supportive community.

In addition to Nellie's emergency services, which includes shelter and medical aid to women and children escaping a dangerous situation, the organization strives to assist women from all social, economical and cultural backgrounds. Counsellors at the centre can assess their needs and provide valuable information regarding housing, immigration, employment and educational issues. There are a number of programs and activities for woman and children that give a much needed sense of security, the kind that only comes from being in a stable environment. Some of the ongoing activities include a weekly supper drop-in, social outings and peer support groups.

While Nellie's does all it can in providing shelter, the centre is only able to accommodate a certain number of women and children. Although, unfortunately, there will likely always be a need for emergency shelter, organizations such as Nellie's do all they can to eradicate the problem of violence against women and children. Volunteers for the centre not only help raise vital funds but also raise awareness and act as advocates for abused women. The aim is to give women the strength that comes from knowledge and information - making them realise that they are not powerless, that they have the ability to change their situation for the better and that there is hope for the future.

If you are a woman in immediate danger please call the Assaulted Women's 24 hour helpline - 1 866 863 0511. For women seeking shelter and/ or assistance from Nellie's, contact the centre at 416 461 8903. Anyone interested in other involvement with the centre, in terms of volunteer/donation support should email [community@nellies.org](mailto:community@nellies.org)

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**Submitted by Jillinda Greene**

*Email [jillinda@jillindagreene.com](mailto:jillinda@jillindagreene.com) or contact her at 416-230-3849 to give her your ideas about unique landmarks in our communities and to see your Sneak Peeks in the pages of snapd in upcoming issues.*